

Despite having in the societal conflict around him plenty of justifications for his spiritual ailments, Elder Thaddeus emphasized the way an individual Christian, by focusing on Christ above and before all earthly concerns, can acquire a spirit of peace regardless of external pressures. According to the elder, our thoughts not only determine our individual perception of reality, but they affect reality

itself: if we hold thoughts of hate toward another person, even if they never know it, we are hurting their soul and impacting their life. Likewise, if we love others with the love of Christ—our children, coworkers, enemies—we will participate in the healing of their souls and of the world, even if they never perceive our thoughts.

“Our life depends on the kind of thoughts we nurture. If our thoughts are peaceful, calm, meek, and kind, then that is what our life is like. If our attention is turned to the circumstances in which we live, we are drawn into a whirlpool of thoughts and can have neither peace nor tranquility.”

While the perspective of Elder Thaddeus can be summed up in the book's title, there is central topic or “point” that the book is trying to make; rather, *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives* attempts to capture the thinking of the elder across a variety of topics, so the book can at times meander. However, the more we sit with the Elder, through his words, the more we appreciated his sayings as important for our own efforts to acquire a spirit of peace. In this, Elder Thaddeus can be for us what another book was for Elder Thaddeus as the novice Tomislav, as described: “Just when all hope abandoned him, God sent him consolation through a copy of *The Path to Salvation* by St. Theophan the Recluse. Thus the experience of the Holy Fathers was confirmed once more in the life of Tomislav. ‘When there is no human being that can bring us comfort, then God comes and brings us joy through a book.’”

Serbia has been in the news recently as tensions in Kosovo have increased. Serbia is a nation that has seen more than its fair share of suffering over the last century. We thank God for the testimony of holiness in the life and wisdom of Elder Thaddeus through this time of suffering, and we pray that God will have mercy on us and the people of Serbia.

## What Are You Reading?

When approaching Orthodox books, one can be intimidated by all of the different titles and topics. Recommendations from friends and clergy can be a helpful way to discern the next book to read. Seth Hart has read and reviewed many books, and in this publication we are highlighting his thoughts on the book “*Our Thoughts Determine our Lives*” by Elder Thaddeus.

### ***Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives:***

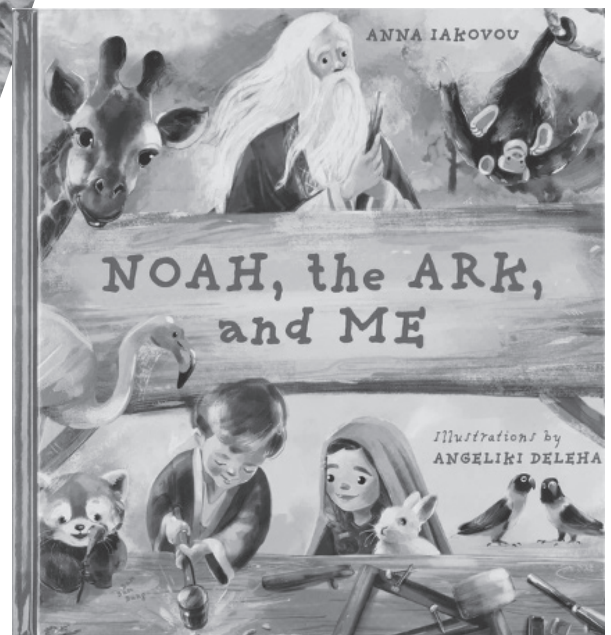
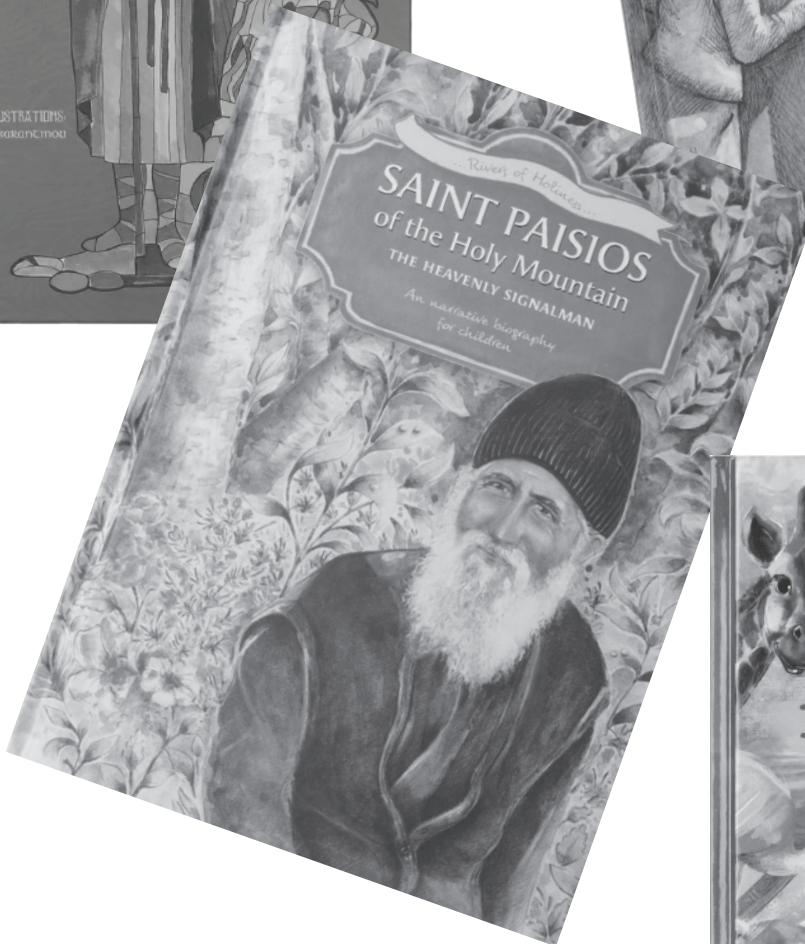
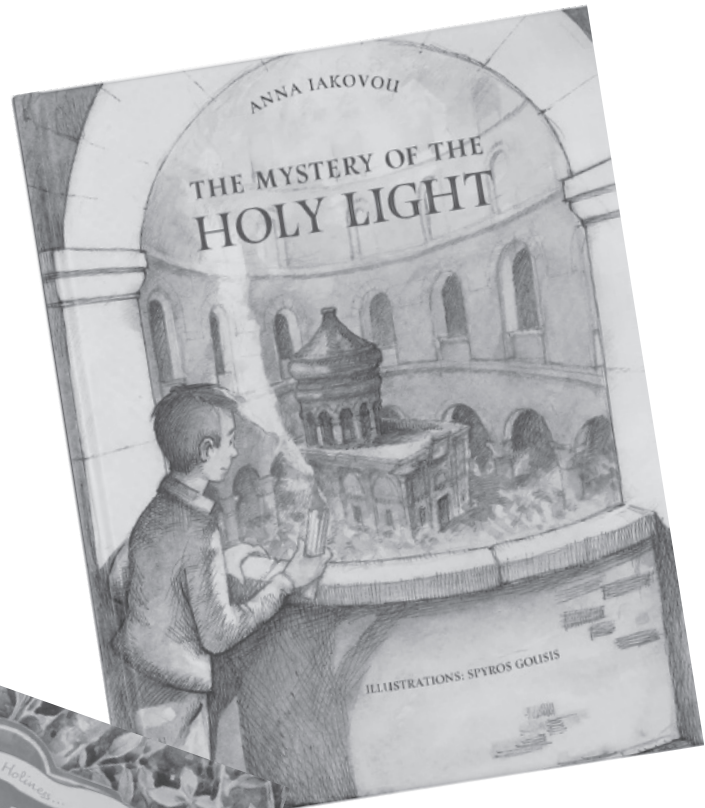
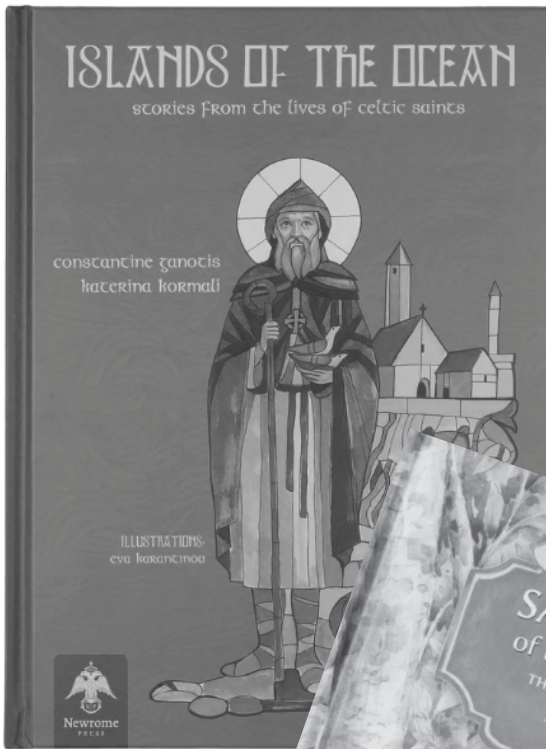
*The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica*

The first half of this volume is a short biography of Elder Thaddeus, who was a monk and spiritual elder in Serbia in the 20th century. The second half is a collection of the Elder's teachings and sayings. In this format, *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives* is like *Wounded by Love* by St. Porphyrios, and the two books make for an interesting set; both books, written by modern elders, one in Greece and one in Serbia, are powerful testimonies to the ongoing movement of the Holy Spirit in our times.

Born at the start of the first World War, Elder Thaddeus lived through World War II and the Kosovo War. Perhaps unsurprising under the circumstances, Elder Thaddeus struggled with anxiety and depression, suffering nervous breakdowns “as a result of the warfare against the temptations of fear, anxiety, and worry.”

## New to the Bookstore:

The world of Orthodox publishing companies is growing, and a favorite to carry in the bookstore is Newrome Press. The quality of their books is exceptional, and the cost is reasonable. They have many selections for adults, but today we will highlight some of their new children's books that we now carry in Christ the Lightgiver Bookstore.



## Upcoming Feasts (Ages 12-17)

Learn more about each feast by clicking on the image or scanning the QR code.



[High School Sunday School materials may be found at Dr. Pat's website:](#)



## Extra curricular activities.

### *Orthodox Chess Club*



An Orthodox Board Chess Club will be re-suming its meetings every 3rd Sunday of the month starting in September. Children between the ages of 5 and 18 are welcome to participate. The meetings will be led by Mr. Andrew Longway from St. Elias who will teach new techniques and strategies each month. The chess club is open to members of the Orthodox Parishes in the area.

### *St. Nicholas Day for older children.*

[In addition to our in-person meetings, Orthodox chess players can find lots of tournament opportunities online](#)



### *Blessing Bags Packing Party.*

This event is offered to foster in our children a desire to live like St. Nicholas did. He lived for God and showed love to the poor and needy, giving them hope and encouragement.

## Olga's Sunday School Book

## Recommendations\*

### Heaven Meets the Earth

Skinas, John Kosmas.  
Celebrating Pascha and the Twelve Feasts. AFP, 2015.

### The Great Feasts

Moiseenkov, Alexander.  
Exaltation Press, 2019.

### Maria, the Mother of God

Dasiou-Ioannou, Athena.  
NewRome Press, 2020.

### The Illustrated Life of the Theotokos for Children

Hronas, Georgia and Helen.  
Light&Life Publishing Company. © 1990. Fourth Printing.

### The Life of St. Nicholas the Wonder-Worker

Seco, Nina.  
St. Nectarios Press, 1994.

### St. Nicholas and the Nine Gold Coins

Forest, Jim.  
St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2015.

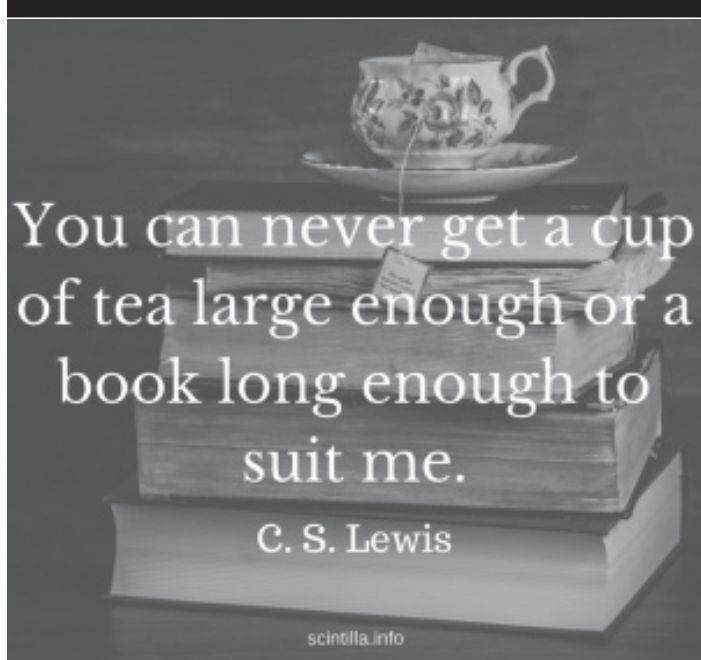
### The Miracle of St. Nicholas

Whelman, Gloria.  
Ignatius Press, 2011.

### The Baker's Dozen

Shepard, Aaron.  
A St. Nicholas Tale. Skyhook Press, 2017.

## Notes from the Catechesis of the



\*List of books provided above are available in the Christ the Lightgiver Bookstore, except for the last two books.

## Good Shepherd

*Greetings from Polly Thurston, Valerie Groh, Stephen Guerra, and Kyle Dickerson Speckhard, and Michael Russ, your Level I catechists and assistants!*

The Level 1 Atrium is a place to nurture the child's innate ability to know and love God, and to be known and loved by God. We have individual lessons with hands-on materials. This fall, we will start with something called "practical life." Practical life lessons allow the child to practice controlled movement, help prepare the child for life in the Church, and are a way for children to engage in prayer of the heart. Examples of practical life lessons are pouring, folding, sewing, beading, and washing. As children become comfortable in the atrium environment, we will learn about the items used in the Divine Liturgy at our model altar, liturgical colors and what they mean, the land of Israel where Jesus lived and performed his ministry, and narratives of Jesus' birth. We will also sing, pray, and practice processions. We are looking forward to our time together—thank you for the opportunity to serve alongside your children.

*Greetings from Sandi Andrews, Sarah Speckhard, and Michael Russ, your Level II catechists and assistants!*

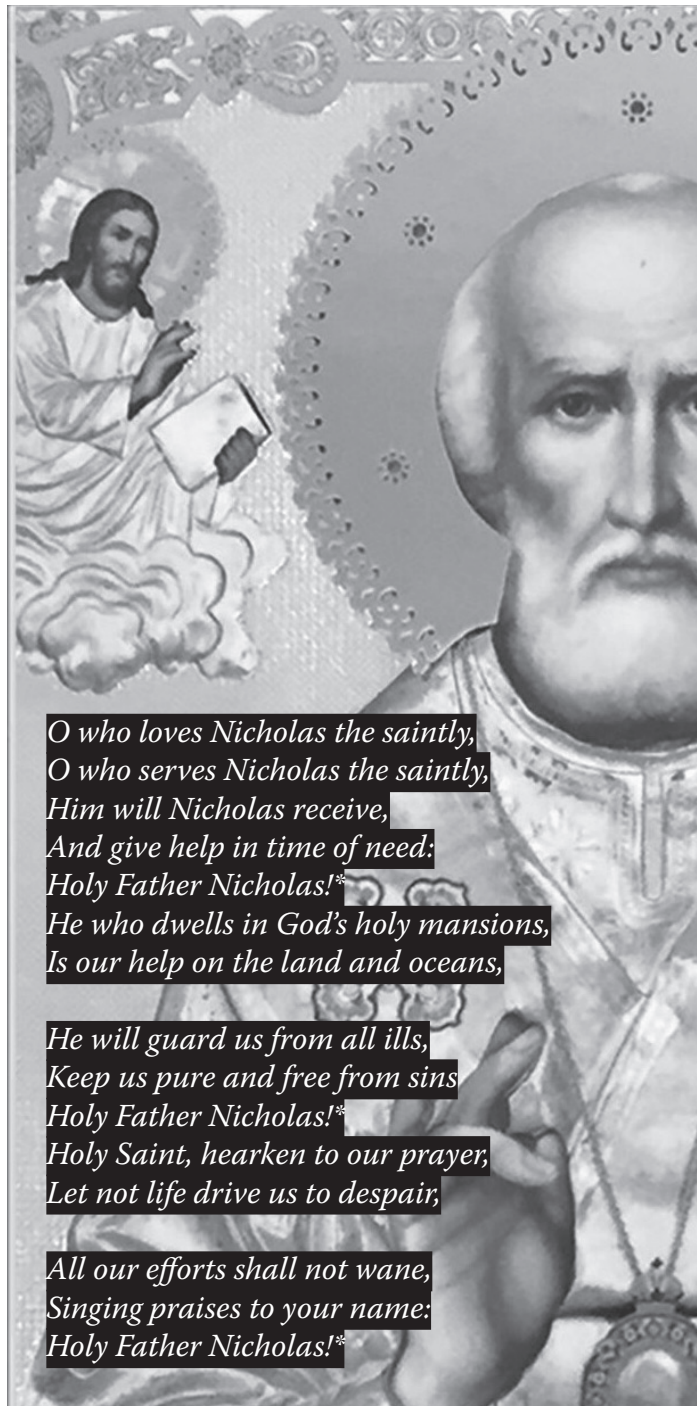
There are many exciting changes coming to the Level II (6-9) Atrium this fall. Children will notice a very different room layout as we have brought in more furniture to accommodate new works. Of course, the materials that they are familiar with will still be , but we are so happy to be able to offer additional materials as well. Children who are new to the atrium will receive an orientation at the beginning of the year, but we will also have a small group orientation on the first day in which the children will create their own boundaries for atrium behavior, examine their surroundings, and begin working with materials. Aside from discussing feast days and the icons that accompany them, we plan to work with the liturgical calendar, altar articles, what's known as La Fettuccia (creation history and the child's place in it), prophecies, and the infancy narratives (historical events surrounding the birth of Christ). We welcome questions and parent observations, so feel free to reach out about either of these

*Greetings from Khouria Xenia Wilson, Sophia Young, and Wesley Stetson, Speckhard, and Michael Russ, your Level III catechists and assistants!*

One of our main goals in Level 3 church school will be to help our young people grow their relationship with their peers and with their family members. Together, we will learn more about the Orthodox Faith, and our hope is that each young person will grow in their own personal relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We're looking forward to seeing everyone when Church School starts on Sunday, September 4!

## On Sunday, December 4, Saint Nicholas will once again visit our parish.

On that Sunday, if you and your children wish to greet Saint Nicholas, please gather on the playground after you get your food and coffee. The choir will be there to lead everyone in a singing of his special hymn, and Saint Nicholas will appear with candy canes and oranges and St. Nicholas cookies. He will sit with the children and tell about himself and his life. In the weeks leading up to his visit, be watching *The Happy Priest* for the music for our St Nicholas hymn, so you can sing this at home with your children as you prepare for his Feast.



*O who loves Nicholas the saintly,  
O who serves Nicholas the saintly,  
Him will Nicholas receive,  
And give help in time of need:  
Holy Father Nicholas!\*  
He who dwells in God's holy mansions,  
Is our help on the land and oceans,*

*He will guard us from all ills,  
Keep us pure and free from sins  
Holy Father Nicholas!\*  
Holy Saint, hearken to our prayer,  
Let not life drive us to despair,*

*All our efforts shall not wane,  
Singing praises to your name:  
Holy Father Nicholas!\**

## Fall Church School Schedule

Sunday, September 4

Sunday, September 18

Sunday, October 2

Sunday, October 16

Sunday, November 6

Sunday, November 20



CHRIST THE  
LIGHTGIVER  
BOOKSTORE

## Bookstore History

*Christ the Lightgiver Bookstore started in Austin, Texas; it was owned by man named Randall Trainer. In the late 1990's, when St John's was located in a strip mall off of Parmer, Randall converted to Holy Orthodoxy in our community; he then closed the bookstore, but he donated a lot of the stock and many of the furnishings to the parish.*

*When St John's moved to Cedar Park, we decided to re-open Christ the Lightgiver. We were meeting in the parish house, so we enclosed the garage and converted it to a bookstore. A great many people joined the parish as a result of our bookstore ministry. Randall Trainer managed the store for several years, but he eventually moved to Odessa to care for his aging parents.*

*The store then had several different managers in the space of a few years, but, when we remodeled the parish house, we invited Stephanie Crown to take over Christ the Lightgiver. We moved the store to it's current location, and, despite being in a smaller space, Stephanie has made Christ the Lightgiver a huge success: every Sunday morning, it's filled with folks who are shopping or visiting or learning more about the Faith.*